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SUBJECT: A/S SHANNON,S FEBRUARY 19 MEETING WITH ARGENTINE
VICE FOREIGN MINISTER VICTORIO TACCETTI

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 119
[1](#)B. BUENOS AIRES 153

[1](#)1. (U) Classified by: Assistant Secretary Thomas A. Shannon
for E.O. 12958, Reasons 1.4 (b) AND (d).

[1](#)2. (U) February 19, 2009, 10:00a.m.) 1:00p.m.

[1](#)3. (U) Participants:

United States
A/S Thomas Shannon
DAS Christopher McMullen
WHA/BSC Director Milt Drucker
WHA/BSC Deputy Director Bruce Friedman
WHA/EPSC Director Matthew Rooney
WHA/PPC Director William McIlhenney
Argentina Desk Officer Jennifer Showell

ARGENTINA
VFM Victorio Taccetti
Ambassador Nestor Stancanelli, Director for International
Economic Negotiations
Ambassador Noemi Gomez, Director for Latin American and
Multilateral Affairs
Minister Antonio Trombetta, Director for North American
Affairs
Ambassador Hector Timerman, Argentine Ambassador to the
United States
DCM Jose Luis Perez Gabilondo
Gustavo Torres, Political Counselor
Roberto Salafia, Economic Counselor
Carlos Mascias, Political Officer

[1](#)4. (U) Summary: Assistant Secretary Thomas A. Shannon and
Argentine Vice Foreign Minister Victorio Taccetti met on
February 19 at the Department of State to discuss bilateral
relations and issues of mutual concern. The conversation
focused primarily on the economic crisis, priorities for the
upcoming G-20 and Summit of the Americas meetings, and
regional issues. Overall, the meeting had a positive and
cordial tone, demonstrating the Government of Argentina,s
(GOA) desire to have a more constructive and cooperative
relationship with the United States. End summary.

[1](#)5. (U) The meeting, held at the request of the GOA, was
intended to serve as an interim meeting in the bilateral
consultation process (under a 1997 agreement, the USG and GOA
hold high-level bilateral consultations, the last of which
was held in Buenos Aires in July 2008). The discussions were
candid and free flowing. They focused primarily on bilateral
issues and topics of mutual concern, including the global
financial crisis, the Summit of the Americas, and bilateral
and multilateral relationships with other countries in South
America.

[1](#)6. (C) The global financial crisis was the focus of much of
the discussion of the meeting. A/S Shannon noted the crisis

is one of the highest priorities for the United States and emphasized the need for a coordinated global response. The members from the Western Hemisphere make up one quarter of the membership of the G-20, and will have an important role to play both at the London meeting and in shaping the outcome of the April Summit of the Americas meeting in Trinidad and Tobago. VFM Taccetti stressed the GOA,s desire to avoid a crisis similar to that of 2001-2002. Ambassador Timerman, President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner,s (CFK) sherpa for the G-20 meetings, described the GOA,s plans to call for reforms to international financial insitutions at the G-20, particularly with respect to developing countries. He also criticized the USG,s &Buy America8 plan, asking if it signaled a retreat from U.S. commitments at the G-20 and elsewhere to avoid protectionist measures. A/S Shannon pointed to President Obama,s strong statements opposing protectionist measures in the stimulus bill and assured the GOA that we would not retreat from international commitments.

¶7. (C) Turning to regional issues, VFM Taccetti described Argentina,s relationships with its neighbors and other countries in the region. The GOA remains concerned about instability in Bolivia, particularly with regard to its effects on Bolivian migration across Argentine borders. In Paraguay, the Lugo government is viewed as having good intentions but in need of assistance in consolidating democracy. Brazil is Argentina,s most important trading partner, although Brazilian policies often have negative effects in Argentina. Venezuela is also an important commercial partner due to its energy exports and imports of Argentine agricultural products. While Taccetti acknowledged the Government of Venezuela can be a difficult partner, he noted the GOA tries to maintain friendly relations with Venezuela. Argentina,s relationship with Mexico is increasing in importance due to levels of commerce as well as the need for increased cooperation on counternarcotics, particularly related to the ephedrine trade.

¶8. (C) In turn, A/S Shannon shared his views on USG relations with the region, which he described as generally positive and constructive. Several countries, including Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Paraguay, are going through historic political changes and are often caught up in their own domestic challenges. While noting difficulties in our relationship with Venezuela and) particularly over the last week) Ecuador, our main concern regarding the Venezuelan government is its relationship with the FARC. When asked his opinion on Iran,s interaction in the hemisphere, A/S Shannon observed that we are increasingly concerned about the presence of Iran in Bolivia and Venezuela due to Iran,s links to terrorism and the inability of their governments to control Iran,s activities.

¶9. (C) Regarding the Summit of the Americas, Ambassador Timerman noted that Cuba,s absence would not be sustainable much longer. He said there is a new vision of Cuba in Latin America in which Cuba has a more integrated role in global affairs. Ambassador Noemi Gomez, the MFA,s Director for Latin American and Multilateral Affairs, described the GOA,s plan to introduce, in conjunction with Venezuela and Bolivia, a declaration against anti-Semitism (similar to one proposed at the Bahia Summit in December). The GOA also asked for U.S. support for their proposed declaration seeking a bilateral resolution to the Malvinas/Falklands dispute with the United Kingdom. (Comment: The GOA had previously introduced this declaration earlier at the Summit Implementation Review Group; the USG was alone in opposing it, as the Summit is not the appropriate forum for this declaration. End Comment.)

¶11. (C) In the discussion on the Summit of the Americas, A/S Shannon underscored the timeliness and importance of economic issues and alternative energy. He pointed out that the world,s focus on the economic crisis would consume much of the discussion. Similarly, A/S Shannon suggested that the world,s urgent need for affordable clean energy would also be a prominent theme. He pointed out that alternative energy maintains a much more predictable price structure compared to

petroleum, making for better planning.

¶12. (C) Over lunch at the Ambassador's residence, the conversation again turned to Cuba. When asked about U.S. policy towards Cuba, A/S Shannon responded that in order to promote change in Cuba, a united message from multiple countries is needed; there will be no change based on a message from the USG alone. A/S Shannon said that Cuba's problems with human rights would remain an important issue for the United States, and it should for other countries in the region as well. He said it was especially troubling that the Cuban government continued to imprison individuals for their political views, and that releasing these people would be a good way to telegraph its intention to make progress on the human rights front. He said that the United States would continue to hold Cuba to international recognized standards of human rights, and that there is also still a large contingent of Americans and their legislators who oppose engagement with Cuba on these grounds.

¶13. (C) Ambassador Gomez asked whether the U.S. would join the new international energy organization being promoted by the Germans, adding that Brazil, Chile and Peru were supporting it. The objective, she said, was to develop a mechanism to transfer energy resources from developed countries to developing ones in an effort to stem poverty and reduce the likelihood of religious or political fanaticism. Ambassador Stancanelli commented that people were focused on the social impact of the crisis, particularly on poverty and unemployment, adding that energy and climate change were really not in the forefront of peoples, thinking. The need, he said, is to devise ideas on how to create and protect employment.

¶14. (C) Ambassador Timerman said that his Embassy had been working with some U.S. Congressmen on developing a Group of Friends of Argentina on the Hill, and that he envisioned a series of exchanges between U.S. and Argentine legislators. He was particularly enthused about the possibility of exchanges between legislators from Argentine and U.S. agricultural regions.

¶15. (U) The lunch concluded with the agreement that both sides would be open to similar meetings in the future, and the next high-level bilateral consultations would be held in late June or July.

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